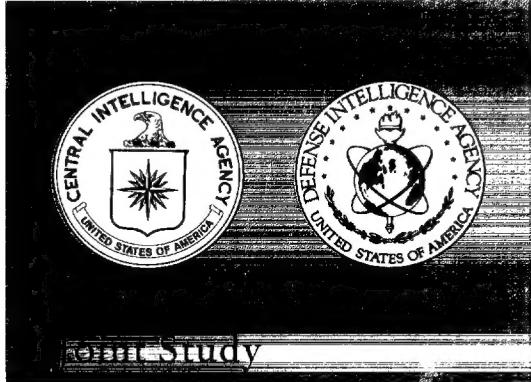


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# Survey of Communist Military Developments in Indochina

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18 July 1974

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**SURVEY OF COMMUNIST  
MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA\***

(This report covers the period  
July 3-17, 1974)

The Key Points

- No new regular infiltration groups were detected moving southward during the past two weeks, but some infiltration apparently is continuing.
- COMINT and photography indicate that a new transportation offensive is under way in northern South Vietnam.
- Three North Vietnamese combat regiments have relocated from Quang Tri to Thua Thien Province, significantly increasing the Communist threat west and southwest of Hue, where the Communists are expected to increase tactical activity.
- Another North Vietnamese antiaircraft artillery regiment has withdrawn from Laos -- the tenth since the 1973 Laos cease-fire.
- Five MIG-21 fighters have deployed to Vinh Airfield, enhancing considerably the Communists' tactical air capability over southern North Vietnam, northern South Vietnam, southern Laos, and the Gulf of Tonkin.
- Food imports to North Vietnam during the first half of 1974 reached record levels -- nearly double those for the same period last year -- and appear likely to remain high.

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\* This report has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.

### Preface

This report summarizes evidence received during the reporting period of (I) Communist efforts to infiltrate new manpower and military supplies toward and into South Vietnam, (II) significant Communist combat activity, and (III) other developments affecting Communist military capabilities in Indochina.

## DETAILS

**I. Infiltration and Redeployment of North Vietnamese Personnel and Military Supplies**

***Personnel Infiltration***

1. Although no new regular infiltration groups have actually been detected moving southward thus far in July, some infiltration appears to be continuing. COMINT indicates that at least four battalions recently completed their pre-infiltration training in North Vietnam's MR 3 Right Bank. At least three of the battalions were specifically preparing to start the trip south in early July — one referenced as being destined for South Vietnam's central coast. Although there was no specific reference to the destination of the other battalions, the pattern of infiltration during the latter months of the regular infiltration cycle suggests that they all probably are going to the northern half of South Vietnam. These four battalions have not as yet been added to our estimate of infiltration starts shown in the table below.

**Comparative Starts of Troops from North Vietnam<sup>1</sup>**

	<b>1972/73</b>	<b>1973/74</b>
Total starts regular infiltration cycle, Sep 1 - Jun 30	94,000	94,000 (91,500)
	<b>1973</b>	<b>1974</b>
Total starts by destination Jul 1-17	1,700	....
MR Tri-Thien	....	....
MR 5	1,700	....
B-3 Front	....	....
COSVN	....	....
Southern Laos/ MR 559	....	....

1. DoD figures are shown in parenthesis.

2. Five new special-purpose infiltration groups, comprising about 70 personnel, were detected moving south during the reporting period. Three of the

groups were destined for Communist MR Tri Thien, and one each for the B-3 Front and COSVN areas. Moreover, a communications intercept of July 5 referenced an unspecified number of special-purpose "Z" groups -- composed of high-ranking personnel -- moving through the infiltration system. None of the groups, however, has as yet been identified.

#### *Redeployments*

3. In South Vietnam, recent COMINT indicates that since early June two North Vietnamese infantry regiments (the 271st and the 18th) and an unidentified artillery regiment have shifted southward from Quang Tri Province into Thua Thien Province in northern MR 1, significantly increasing the Communist threat west and southwest of Hue. These regiments are now within the operating area of the NVA 324B Infantry Division, which is primarily targeted against ARVN outposts forming the outer defense perimeter of Hue.

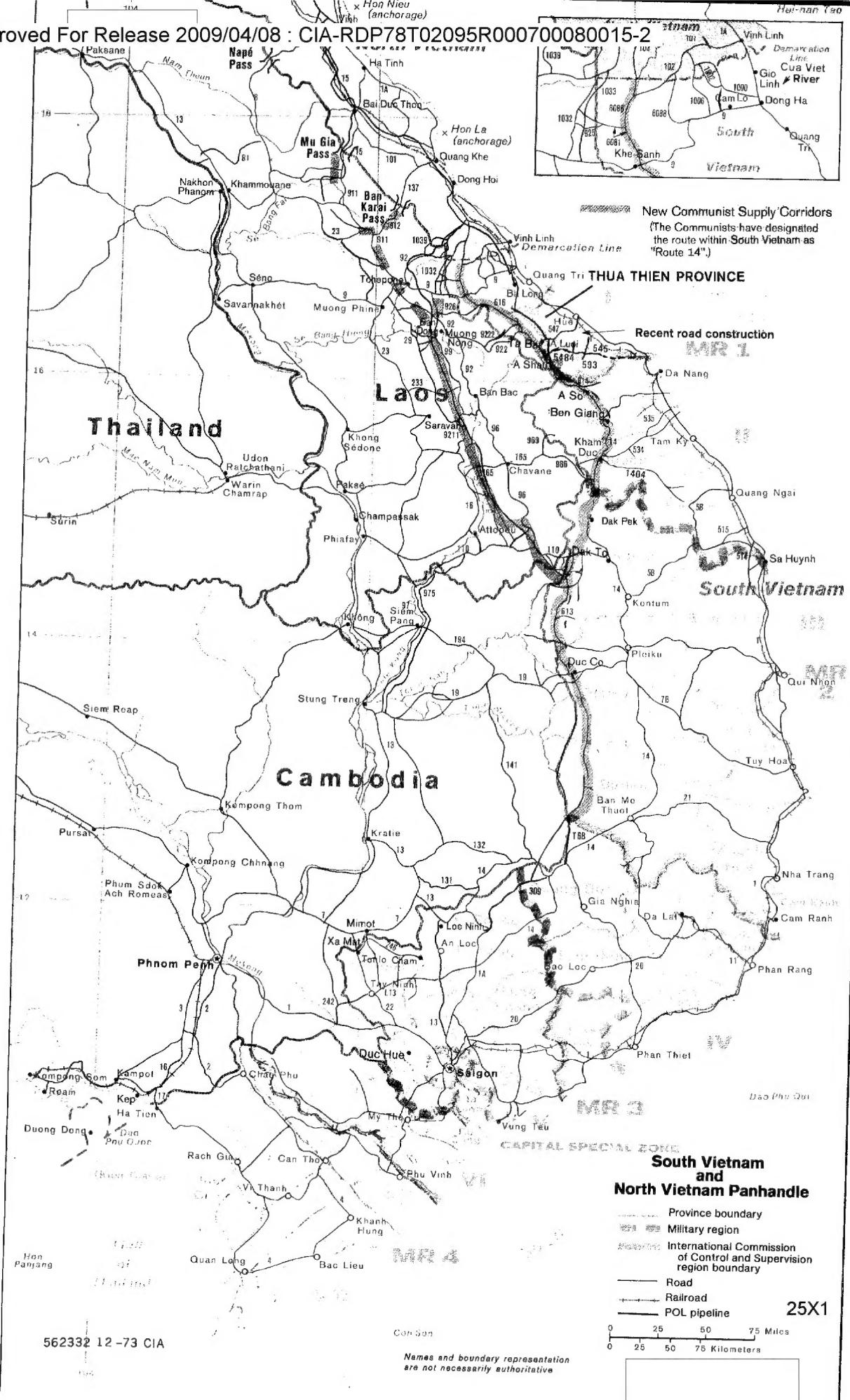
4. At the same time, the forward element of the 324B Division has expanded its communications considerably -- an indicator of tactical preparations. In addition, the activation of forward elements of the NVA Tri-Thien Front -- the tactical control authority for northern MR 1 -- and the NVA 304th Infantry Division also suggests that the North Vietnamese will increase the level of activity.

5. Other indications of impending tactical activity include recent Communist construction activity southwest of Hue. Aerial photography [redacted] indicates that a series of new, short roads and a number of new military-related facilities have been built within artillery range of ARVN positions south of Hue (see the transportation map). The newly cleared or improved roads lead off a main route running eastward from the A Shau Valley and appear to be access roads to new military encampments, including at least one occupied antiaircraft site and some clearings possibly for use by field artillery.

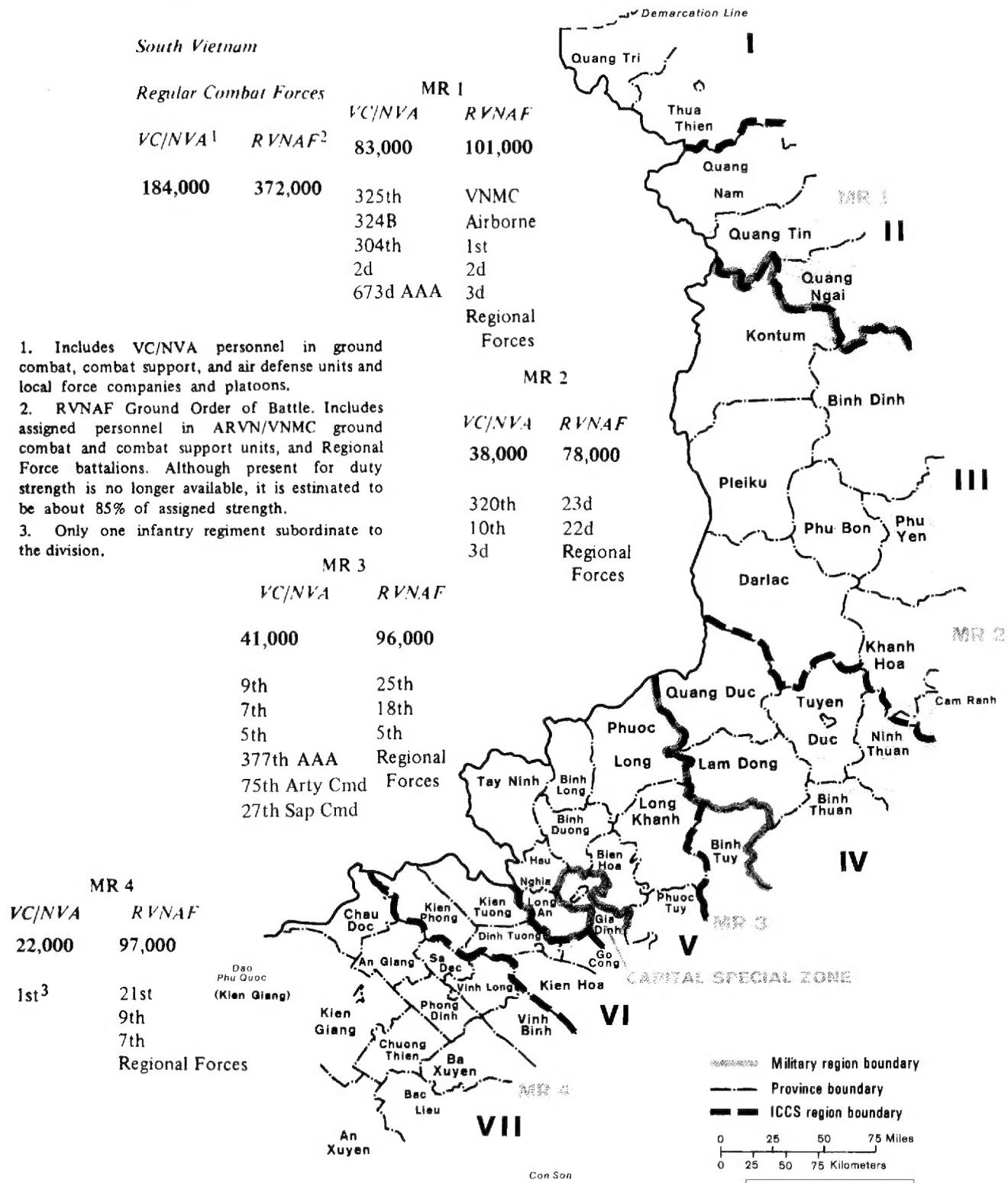
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6. Moreover, General Truong -- the commander of GVN MR 1 -- expects a Communist military high point in the region before the end of July and is now using his own forces to disrupt Communist plans. Truong is particularly concerned about the Thua Thien area, from which he has received reports of increased Communist resupply efforts and other preparations for a step-up in combat activity.

7. Farther south, the NVA 205th Infantry Regiment, with some 1,000 troops, apparently has moved from Quang Due Province in MR 2 to northwestern MR 3 (see the map on Communist and South Vietnamese combat forces). Although not yet confirmed by COMINT, recent rallier reports indicate the unit's relocation. The regiment was originally sent to Quang Due late last year as part of a 5,000-man task force used to secure the Communist strategic supply route through the province



## Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam



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and reportedly suffered heavy casualties in the fighting there. Despite the regiment's relocation, the number of Communist combat forces in MR 3 remains unchanged at 41,000 because of offsetting changes in strength of other combat units in the region.

8. In Laos, COMINT [ ] indicates that the NVA 214th Antiaircraft Artillery (AAA) Regiment, which formerly operated in the Panhandle, is currently located in southern North Vietnam. The actual date of the unit's withdrawal, however, cannot be determined, as it was last observed in communications in [ ]

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Because at least nine other AAA regiments have left southern Laos since February 1973, the 214th Regiment probably also left after the signing of the cease-fire agreement. All but the 214th, however, relocated eastward into South Vietnam. The redeployment of the 214th Regiment reduces estimated North Vietnamese combat troops remaining in Laos to 17,000 men, of which about 10,000 are in the south. Also, the Communists have reduced their administrative services personnel in Laos by some 2,000 troops (to 27,000), probably reflecting rainy season withdrawals. As a result, North Vietnamese strength in Laos now totals 44,000.

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#### *Movement of Military Equipment and Supplies*

##### *North Vietnam*

9. Detected supply shipments through the Vinh area continued in a routine fashion during the past two weeks, although heavy coastal shipping continues and large quantities of supply are probably moving through this area of the Panhandle as part of the new transportation offensive in northern South Vietnam (see paragraphs 13 and 14, below). Identified shipments - which totaled only several hundred tons - included ordnance and consisted primarily of ammunition for mortars and recoilless rifles. To the south, Binh Tram (BT) 16 near Dong Hoi handled several thousand tons of cargo during the period July 1-15, also probably as part of the transportation offensive.

10. In other activity, recent COMINT indicates that on June 29, the Chinese vessel ***Hung Ch'i 151*** off-loaded at the port of Dong Hoi 2,200 tons of cargo that was ultimately destined for Dong Ha. Probably related to this activity was a July 4 directive ordering transport ships of a previously unobserved "Red River Group" to begin moving cargo from Dong Hoi to Dong Ha. BT 16 was directed to provide vehicles, if necessary, to assist the "Red River Group" with its mission.

##### *Laos*

11. Little information on the level of truck activity in southern Laos was received during the past two weeks. COMINT did indicate, however, that units in southern Laos were involved in shipping supplies south along the Se Kong and

Tonle Kong Rivers in Laos and Cambodia. On July 5 a logistics unit, probably located in northeastern Cambodia, reported that it had received 16 boats with 90 tons of cargo from Group 472 units and had dispatched five boats with 85 tons of supplies to COSVN.

12. During the past year, only sporadic reporting has been received on the amount of supplies shipped along the Se Kong and Tonle Kong Rivers by the North Vietnamese. They did make extensive efforts during the period, however, to improve road-to-river transshipment points in the tri-border area. Moreover, although photography showed that the North Vietnamese opened the Laos/Cambodia cross-border route this past dry season, very little traffic was observed, suggesting that the Communists relied more heavily on watercraft to move supplies from southern Laos into Cambodia. With the rainy season now in full swing in Laos, the Communists will probably use the rivers even more to move cargo in these areas.

#### *South Vietnam*

13. Logistic activity in northern South Vietnam was highlighted by the reference to a new transportation offensive. On July 9 the NVA 99th Engineer Regiment, which operates in northern South Vietnam, instructed its subordinate units to report the details of their activity during the "days of the general transportation offensive." Although no further information was given, such transportation offensives in the past have involved the movement of large quantities of supplies during a relatively short period. Probably as part of this offensive, the NVA 541st Support Regiment was scheduled to coordinate "24,000 vehicle trips" during July, including 6,000 trips to MR Tri Thien and 16,000 trips to VC MR 5, according to a July 9 intercept. Some 1,900 trucks were to be involved in this effort, although the precise types and amount of cargo to be transported were not specified in the message.

14. Both COMINT and photography confirmed the shipment of large quantities of supplies through northern South Vietnam during the period. On July 5, for example, some 250 tons of munitions were sent by the 541st Regiment to VC MR 5. Two days later, the regiment indicated that more than 600 tons of munitions had been shipped out of one of its storage areas in western Quang Tri Province to a unit located on Communist Route 14. Aerial reconnaissance during

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[redacted] confirmed that the North Vietnamese were making heavy use of the northern portions of this route. Observed sections of Route 14 between Khe Sanh and tri-border area all appeared to be heavily traveled, with large vehicle convoys sighted at several points. The largest of these consisted of nearly 200 trucks seen on July 4 on Route 616 just south of Khe Sanh.

## II. Significant Communist Combat Activity

15. Communist cease-fire violations remained stable during the past two weeks, with a daily average of about 87 incidents reported. A total of 202 incidents was reported on July 14, however, reflecting Communist attempts to disrupt local elections. ARVN casualties remained about the same as in the previous two-week period at 30 per day, while Communist casualties increased from a daily average of 89 to 116.

16. Significant activity in MR 1 focused on NVA ground probes and attacks-by-fire against Marine positions southeast of Quang Tri City and west and south of Hue. In MR 2, Communist forces have continued attacks against government troops attempting to provide security around Kontum and Pleiku cities and along GVN Route 14 northeast of Ban Me Thuot in Darlac Province. Communist sappers also attacked a British-registered oil tanker in the anchorage at Nha Trang in Khanh Hoa Province on July 11, resulting in light damage to the ship and a loss of some 100,000 gallons of diesel fuel. The petroleum and ammunition storage sites at Nha Trang Airfield also were attacked on the 14th with moderate damage. Although ARVN has abandoned attempts to recapture Regional Force Base 82 in Binh Duong Province of MR 3, Communist forces are continuing to conduct ground probes and attacks-by-fire against government forces in the area.

17. MR 4 continues to report the largest number of incidents, primarily in Dinh Tuong, Chuong Thien, Kien Giang, and Ba Xuyen Provinces. The sharp increase of incidents reported during the past week is a result of the disruptive tactics directed against local elections held on July 14, which coincided with the normal mid-month highpoint of tactical activity. The majority of these incidents were minor attacks-by-fire and ground probes.

## III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Military Capabilities in Indochina

### *Hanoi Further Expands Jet Fighter Capability South of 20th Parallel*

18. Communication intercepts indicate that on July 10 and 11 five MIG-21 fighters deployed from Phuc Yen Airfield northwest of Hanoi to Vinh Airfield in Nghe An Province in southern North Vietnam. The presence of more than one or two MIGs suggests that sustained operations will be conducted out of Vinh, probably including training in air-to-air combat in the immediate area. Navigational and area familiarization flights have already been flown as far south as Dong Hoi in Quang Binh Province. The deployment of these five high-performance aircraft with highly qualified pilots to Vinh enhances considerably

the overall tactical air capability of the North Vietnamese for operations over southern North Vietnam, northern South Vietnam, southern Laos, and the Gulf of Tonkin area.

19. Currently, there are a total of 17 MIG aircraft deployed south of the 20th parallel, including 12 MIG-17/21 fighters at Bai Thuong Airfield in Thanh Hoa Province. This is the largest number of jets located in southern North Vietnam since the spring of 1972. Flights to other airfields in the Panhandle, including Dong Hoi, are expected, as Hanoi probably will continue to deploy fighters southward into this area.

*NVA Regiment Disbanded in MR 1*

20. A recent North Vietnamese rallier from MR 1 has confirmed previous indications that the NVA 31st Infantry Regiment was disbanded in 1973. The regiment, which formerly operated in Quang Tri Province, last appeared in communications late last year. Although the unit has been disbanded, its personnel are believed to have been assigned to other units in MR 1.

*North Vietnamese Agricultural Problems*

21. Hanoi has been focusing its attention on agriculture in recent weeks to encourage rapid harvesting of the spring rice crop and completion of preparations for the larger autumn crop. Harvesting of the spring crop is about a month behind the normal May-June schedule because poor weather earlier in the growing season slowed development of rice seedlings and delayed transplanting. The size of the harvest is not yet known, but the delay probably will reduce the crop some 10% - 20% below last year's moderately successful harvest of an estimated 1.3 million tons of rice. North Vietnam apparently avoided major losses from the first two typhoons of the new season, although the danger is not yet completely past.

22. The spring harvest will help ease the food situation, but Hanoi remains dependent on its allies not only to meet emergencies but also to satisfy normal demand. Food imports reached record levels in the first half of 1974 and appear likely to remain high. Seaborne imports of 530,000 tons during January-June were nearly double the 285,000 tons shipped during the same period in 1973, and Peking's scheduled overland shipment of some 195,000 tons was 10% higher than last year. Continuing large-scale imports are slated for the summer months, when food imports normally fall to a seasonal low. Peking has reported a July schedule for 115,000 tons of food, and Hanoi has already requested 130,000 tons in August. Some of these shipments probably will consist in part of grain purchased by China from other sources, including Australia and the United States.

23. Prospects for improvement in the agricultural situation later this year are poor; output from both crops together probably will fall below last year's total -- only about three-fourths of North Vietnamese requirements. Because of the delay in the spring harvest, some reduction in output of the autumn crop is virtually certain. Some autumn rice seedlings reportedly were ready for transplanting in June, but the fields have not yet been prepared because of the late spring crop. This further increases the possibility of weather damaging the autumn crop. At the least, yields are likely to be reduced because growing conditions will not be optimum.

## ANNEX

INFILTRATION OF NORTH VIETNAMESE PERSONNEL  
TO THE SOUTH

Since the implementation of the cease-fire settlement for South Vietnam on January 27, 1973, some 160,000 North Vietnamese troops and specialists have infiltrated southward. About 135,000 of this total have started south since that time. Since June 15, 1973, when the original accord was reaffirmed, some 109,000 troops and specialists have been sent south. The table shows the number of North Vietnamese troops starting south, by destination, since January 1, 1973.

As stated in the June 5 report, the DoD figures are about 2,500 less than the numbers shown above. In the table below, the DoD figures are indicated in parentheses.

Number of Troops Entering the Pipeline Destined  
for South Vietnam, Southern Laos, and Cambodia  
Since January 1, 1973<sup>1</sup>

	COSVN	B-3 Front	MR 5	MR Tri-Thien	Southern Laos/ MR 559	Total
<b>Total 1973</b>	<b>52,500</b>	<b>15,500</b>	<b>24,000</b>	<b>17,000 (14,500)</b>	<b>26,500</b>	<b>135,500 (133,000)</b>
Jan-Mar	12,000	5,500	4,000	5,000	1,000	27,500
Apr-Jun	1,000	...	...	7,000	1,500	9,500
Jul-Aug	...	...	3,000	...	1,500	4,500
Sep	...	...	2,000	2,000	3,000	7,000
Oct	...	...	...	...	14,000	14,000
Nov	1,000	1,000	...	...	5,500	7,500
Dec	3,500	1,000	...	...	...	4,500
<b>1974</b>						
Jan	10,500	3,000	...	...	...	13,500
Feb	5,500	2,000	1,500	...	...	9,000
Mar	12,500	2,000	4,500	...	...	19,000
Apr	6,500	1,000	5,500	2,500 (...)	...	15,500 (13,000)
May	...	...	3,500	500	...	4,000
Jun	...	...	...	...	...	...
Jul 1-17	...	...	...	...	...	...

1. Excluding special-purpose personnel. The totals are rounded to the nearest 500.

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